

Task Force B Meeting Summary

Wednesday, August 27, 2008

Task Force Participants: Jane Berkey – Kids Food Basket, Jennifer Fike – Food System Economic Partnership, Lisa Goldenhar – MI Department of Community Health, Diane Golzynski – MI Department of Community Health and MFPC Member, Kimberly Keilen – MI Department of Human Services and MFPC, Viki Lorraine – MI Department of Community Health, Jane Marshall (Chair) – Food Bank Council of Michigan and MFPC Member, Marla Moss – MI Department of Education and MFPC Member, Barb Mutch – Michigan State University Extension, Anne Scott – C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems, Terri Stangl – Center for Civil Justice, Amie White – MI Department of Community Health, Malik Yakini – Nsoroma Charter School Academy and MFPC Member

Additional Participants: Sarah Schillio – Office of State Representative Lee Gonzales, Ted Beals, Peggy Beals

Task Force B: Improving Access to Fresh and Healthy Foods convened on Wednesday August 27, 2008 from 1:30pm-3:30pm in Constitution Hall in Lansing. Council member Jane Marshall chaired the meeting.

Ms. Marshall called the meeting to order and initiated a brief round of introductions. Kirsten Simmons, executive coordinator of the Michigan Food Policy Council (MFPC), gave the group an overview of the two duties of each taskforce. Taskforce B will work to implement the recommendations outlined under this taskforce in the MFPC's 2006 Report of Recommendations and will be asked to address emerging food policy issues from time to time. Ms. Simmons also expressed to the group that there is particular interest in state government around urban agriculture, which can encompass many activities in our urban areas around the state.

The group was told that the purpose of this meeting was to begin to discuss and develop priorities in implementation of the recommendations to focus our efforts. Ms. Simmons asked the group to let her know if there were additional people that should be invited to the table.

Taskforce members discussed research on food deserts that has occurred in the last few years, including work by Mari Gallagher in Detroit. Kirsten said she would share a copy of this report by email with the taskforce participants.

Discussion moved to progress and opportunities under each of the Taskforce B recommendations.

Recommendation B1:

Members asked if stores authorized as EBT vendors are checked periodically to determine the variety and quality of food they provide to customers. The Department of Human Services representative said she would check on this for our next meeting.

It was brought to the taskforce's attention that there will soon be new standards for WIC grocery purchases that include a specific focus on fresh fruits and vegetables.

The group also discussed the success of EBT training for farmers markets that was provided by the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) and wondered whether it might be helpful to have a mentoring program set up to foster training for new farmers markets accepting food stamps. The group thought it would be good to talk with Dru Montri at MIFMA about this and whether it would be helpful.

Recommendation B2:

Taskforce members mentioned the importance of gardens to schools and discussed various barriers to these programs. It was suggested that the taskforce consider this as one of its priorities in the coming year. One suggestion was that students do garden work as part of their required volunteer hours for school.

There was consensus from the taskforce that communication and distribution of universal school garden resources is important. Some of the members said that resources and best practices provided in one location on the web would be helpful. The group also discussed the opportunity for a mentoring program, similar to the Big Brothers, Big Sisters model, where a new school gardening program is paired with an older school gardening program.

Recommendation B3:

The taskforce discussed the rising number of people utilizing the Food Assistance Program and questioned whether outreach was a need at this time. The group also discussed reasons for the increase in participation. It was noted by one of the taskforce members that 1 out of 14 callers on their organization's hotline said someone in their household had lost income.

It was suggested that the Food Assistance message be built into more regular mailings, press, and other activities.

Recommendation B4:

One of the taskforce members mentioned that there is a legislative workgroup on and Afterschool Supper Program. The group discussed barriers to such a program, which includes licensing and knowledge of the program itself.

The group discussed the method of outreach that is currently used for the Summer Food Service Program. It was indicated that a lot of it is done county by county right now. Ms. Simmons suggested that Greg Roberts, director of the Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, would be a good contact for finding potential Summer Food Service Program at sites statewide.

It was mentioned that supporting and strengthening the Summer Food Service Program is also a goal of Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan for Summer/Fall 2009. Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan is a workgroup funded by a grant from the National Governor's Association to address childhood obesity prevention. It is led by Michigan's Surgeon General. There is a five-year action plan associated with this project that addresses childhood obesity from a community, school, and health, family & childcare services standpoint.

The Department of Education representative said she will check on the number of Summer Food Service sites and report any increases at the next taskforce meeting.

The participants also discussed that school breakfast and lunch are not necessarily provided for students at charter schools or for those that are home schooled. The Department of Education representative said that their department knows which charter schools participate and will get the number of participating schools for our next meeting.

Taskforce members discussed the possibility of offering workshops on food programs and community/school gardens for schools, including charter schools.

Recommendation B5:

The taskforce discussed utilizing nutrition education match funding for programs/projects targeted to those receiving food assistance in each county.

The group asked about the status of licensing requirements for county extension kitchens and school gardens. They specifically were talking about requirements for locations where there is no commerce, just nutrition education taking place. Ms. Simmons said she would talk to Kathy Fedder in the Michigan Department of Agriculture's Food & Dairy Division to explore the issue. The group asked that Ms. Simmons see if Kathy would be willing to give an overview at our next taskforce meeting before we make a decision on next steps.

Recommendation B6:

Taskforce members discussed that what we need is a streamlining of food resources. Members mentioned that there are some good resources provided through United Way. The taskforce asked that Ms. Simmons invite United Way to participate on the taskforce and make a presentation on the status of the state 211 system at our next taskforce meeting.

Closing/Next Steps

There was no public comment made by the guests in attendance.

Between this meeting and the next meeting of Taskforce B, Ms. Simmons will consolidate the ideas expressed in the meeting as opportunities and send out a draft of possible priorities for consideration and comment. The goal of the next taskforce meeting in November is to finalize priority areas for Taskforce B as it moves forward with implementation of the recommendations. Ms. Simmons will work with Becky Henne to schedule a taskforce meeting that coincides with the Michigan State Nutrition Action Plan (MiSNAP) meeting, due to the shared interests of these two groups.